

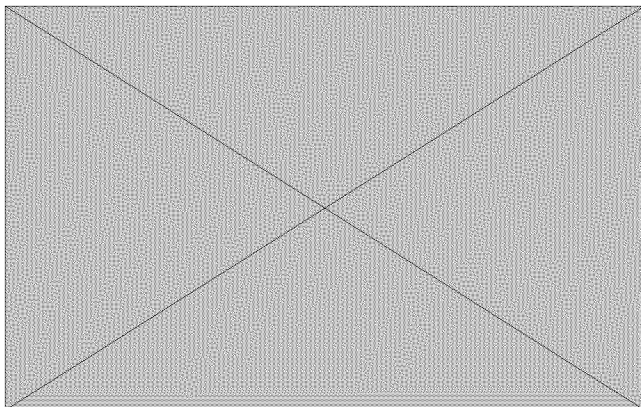
From: Campbell, Michael  
Sent: 1/10/2013 4:14:48 PM  
To: Dietz, Sidney (/O=PG&E/OU=Corporate/cn=Recipients/cn=SBD4)  
Cc:  
Bcc:  
Subject: Bike snob thinks as much of bicycle "engineering" as you do...

Thought you'd like this...

### Gilding the Lily: Building a Better Bike

Every so often I like to check in with the websites of the various big bicycle companies. Of course, when I do I know that I should not expect to find much actual information, since finding a fact on these sites is like finding a marble in a kiddie pool full of oatmeal. Instead, I visit simply to be entertained, and I'm rarely disappointed--especially when it comes to the copy. Here's a bit of copy I read recently which I found particularly provocative, as well as a dramatization of what may have happened between the lines:

#### Cannondale Scalpel Team Replica



The copy: *"Our Cannondale Vredestein team thought we were insane, 'Why would you want to change something that's perfect?' Our engineers asked, 'What would make it better?' The team responded, 'More travel, lighter, stiffer.' Done."*

#### **ACT I**

TEAM: You guys are insane! Why would you want to change something that's perfect?

HEAD OF CANNONDALE: Wow. I mean really, wow. You think the bike's perfect? I'm blushing!

TEAM: Yeah! Well, I mean, it's kinda weird looking, but we've already got all the wrenches for it and

stuff. Not only that, but we've also got all the riders' seat and bar heights and junk just right. If you make a new bike we're going to have to figure that stuff out all over again. That could take hours.

HEAD OF CANNONDALE: I see. But don't you want the bike to have more travel, and to be lighter and stiffer?

TEAM: Not really, we just run the suspension on lockout. Light's good I guess. Easier to carry.

HEAD OF CANNONDALE: Oh. Well, at any rate, don't worry. You're gonna love the new bike.

TEAM: Whatever.

## ACT II

HEAD OF CANNONDALE: [Throwing bike out window] We need a totally new Scalpel!

ENGINEER: [Dropping protractor in surprise] What? Why? What would make it better?

HEAD OF CANNONDALE: Selling more of them, that's what! What do you think this is, a kibbutz? We're a publicly-traded company! You know what our stock's trading at right now? Four cents a share! [Digs in pocket, grabs some pocket change and throws it at the ENGINEER.] You know what I did just there? I just bought thirty-two percent of the company! Someone could buy us out right now for less than it costs to do a load of delicates at the laundromat! There are literally people standing in front of vending machines right now and asking themselves, "Hmm, I could buy this bag of peanut M&Ms, or I could own half of Cannondale." And you know what they're doing? They're buying the freaking candy!

ENGINEER: All right, all right. But think for a minute. Even small changes are a major pain in the ass, and those changes cost money. What about a decal redesign?

HEAD OF CANNONDALE: You don't think we're doing that? We just hired someone off Craigslist. But there's only so much we can do there. We've got one of the longest names in the industry and there's only so many places on the bike we can fit it. Man, those guys at Trek have it so easy!

ENGINEER: Okay. What about a name change?

HEAD OF CANNONDALE: Wow, you're a genius. You wanna be head of marketing? I think you'd be great at that. Idiot. Scalpel's the perfect name! We'd be nuts to change it! It's sharp and precise! Do you know how many names we went through before we picked it? Paring Knife—too culinary. X-Acto Knife—already trademarked. Samurai Sword—too ethnic. The Hedge Clipper—too landscaper—

ENGINEER: All right, how about this? We move the fork leg from the left side of the bike to the right and we call it the "Righty."

HEAD OF CANNONDALE: Where the hell are you gonna put the brake?

ENGINEER: Uh, we'll make an adaptor?

HEAD OF CANNONDALE: Do you know anything about bikes at all?

ENGINEER: No! I told you that when you hired me from that novelty company.

HEAD OF CANNONDALE: Yeah, well call me crazy, but I thought the guy who invented the [Superfly Oinking Pig](#) might know a thing or two about engineering.

ENGINEER: Well, I'm doing the best I can.

HEAD OF CANNONDALE: I know you are. [Putting his arm around ENGINEER.] Hey, look, I know I'm being tough on you. I'm under a lot of pressure is all. I've got LeBron James breathing down my neck like a teenager on a date. I just wanna make a hit out of this thing, you know?

ENGINEER: I know.

HEAD OF CANNONDALE: Great. I knew I could count on you. Now let's build a bike!

[They high-five]

### **ACT III**

HEAD OF CANNONDALE: So here it is, the new frame.

TEAM: Cool. Decals are a little cheesy. Why is the fork leg on the right? What are we supposed to do about the brake?

HEAD OF CANNONDALE: Just flip the wheel around.

TEAM: Oh. Well thanks.

HEAD OF CANNONDALE: No problem—thanks for the input.

**FIN**